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**Kingstree Dry Goods
Company**

Kingstree, - - South Carolina

A Battle Within a Battle

By M. QUAD

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Our battery had been doing splendid service. From our position on the right we could see the shells drop into the woods and break up the formation of the Confederate cavalry every time they left cover.

We knew where they were. Jeb Stuart's old troopers were there; Wade Hampton's dragoons were there—Imboden, Rosser, Mosby—every Confederate cavalry command we had fought in Virginia was making ready in the shelter of the woods to charge on our left flank.

"Boom! Boom! Boom!"

The gunners knew what was at stake. The orders were to die at the guns if the position could not be held. For half an hour their bursting shells kept the front clear, and we of the cavalry cheered them.

Out from the cover of the forest at half a dozen places gallop the gray troopers by hundreds. They wheel to the right and left, form in two lines, take their distance, close up with a trembling motion, and now there will be a grand charge. The shells burst in front of them, among them, but discipline is stronger than the fear of death.

Less than 300 of us—all cavalry—to support the battery. If that mob of gray riders ever reaches the foot of the slope we shall be picked up and sent whirling like dry leaves in a hurricane. The fire of the six guns becomes more rapid. It is truly terrible, but in their haste the gunners do less execution.

"Left wheel! Forward! Right dress!"

Just 278 of us by actual count as we dress in two ranks. What are we going to do?

"Draw sabers! Forward! Trot! Gallop! Charge!"

They are driving us down at that body of men—ten times our number—to break and check the charge. If we can stop them for ten minutes the battery will be saved by the infantry. We oblique to the left as we go to close up. We are a living wedge, driving down to enter a living mass and split it in twain.

The wedge enters. The wedge drives ahead over fallen horses and dismounted men, yelling, slashing, cutting, keeping their pace. A trooper slashes at me, a horse goes down in front of mine, I feel myself falling with my horse, and then I am out of the fight for a moment.

The darkness which enshrouded things passes away after a bit, and I and my horse lying across my feet with the saddle flap so holding him that his dead body must be lifted up to get me out.

The charge of the gray troopers was broken. That wedge drove right through the mass and turned to attack them in the rear. Swirling about in circles like the vulture of war, the mass of men edges away until the field about me is clear of all but the dead and wounded. I've got a saber cut on the shoulder and can feel the warm blood bathing my arm, but I know I could walk away if I could get my feet clear. I am working to extricate them when I hear hoofbeats behind me. The next moment a riderless horse dashes up and comes to a halt. He has not been hit, but he has left his rider dead back there in the stubble, a Federal captain.

The horse stands pawing and snorting when out from the whirl of death, half a mile away, breaks a chestnut charger and comes galloping down upon us. There is blood on the saddle flaps—drops of blood on his shiny flanks. It is not his blood, but that of the Confederate man who rode him, and who has been cut down by a stroke of the saber.

It is gray versus chestnut—Federal versus Confederate. The newcomer is still a hundred feet away, when the gray horse rushes at him with ears laid back and mouth open, and as I watch them I forget that shells are screaming, bullets whistling and the saber doing bloody work within sound of my voice. As the two horses come together they rear up, neigh defiance at each other and a fight begins—a battle within a battle. Each seems embued with a deadly hatred for the other, and to be determined to destroy his antagonist.

Of a sudden I realize that they are close upon me. In their mad fury they see neither dead nor wounded—hear not the shout and shot of battle.

The gray kicks a dead man aside as he backs up for a fresh effort; the chestnut tramples the life out of a wounded man as he dances about. They will be over me if I do not stop them. The heels of the gray are throwing dirt into my face as I unsling my carbine and rest it across my dead horse for a shot. I fire at the gray, as he is the nearer and the greater menace, but the bullet misses the target. At that moment they begin to work to the left, and in the next they are past me, leaping over dead horses and trampling on dead men as they scream and bite and kick.

Above the roar of battle I hear a rifle shell coming. It gives out a growling, complaining sound which no man ever hears without a chill. The sound grows louder—nearer—crash! The horses were fifty feet away, and it must have struck one of them. There was a cloud of smoke, a whizzing of ragged fragments, and when I could see again both horses were down—torn and mangled and almost blotted off the face of the earth by the awful force of the explosion.

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